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Message Text

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14
ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00

DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 L-03 SS-15

NSC-05 SY-05 MCT-01 SP-02 TRSE-00 (ISO) W
---------- 127060
R 041356Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6140

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, KU
SUBJ: INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT SECURITY

REF: (A) STATE 184853, (B) STATE 212490

1. THE SECURITY PROCEDURES CURRENTLY IN EFFECT AT KUWAIT'S INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT ARE FOCUSED MORE ON TRADITIONAL POLICE CONCERNS--PREVENTING ILLEGAL OR BLACK-LISTED ENTRANTS AND THE PHYSICAL SECURITY OF AIRCRAFT--THAN ON DETERRING HIJACKINGS OR AIRLINE TERRORISM. ACCESS TO THE AREA WHICH SERVES AS BOTH DEPARTURE AND TRANSIT LOUNGE IS CONTROLLED ONLY BY TWO ARMED POLICEMEN POSTED NEAR THE IMMIGRATION CONTROL COUNTERS. DEPENDING UPON THE LEVEL OF ACTIVITY AT THE AIRPORT, THE TIME OF DAY AND THE PERSONALITY OF THE POLICEMEN, ILLEGAL ACCESS IS SOMETIMES QUITE DIFFICULT, BUT AT OTHER TIMES VERY EASY. THE IMMIGRATION CONTROL BOOTHS THEMSELVES ARE SLOPPILY MANNED, AND ONCE PAST THE ARMED GUARDS, THERE IS USUALLY NOTHING TO PREVENT ONE FROM WALKING THROUGH IMMIGRATION CONTROL INTO THE DEPARTURE LOUNGE WITHOUT SHOWING A PASSPORT OR TICKET. BODY SEARCH (BY HAND) OF EMPLANING PASSENGERS TAKES PLACE JUST PRIOR TO LEAVING THE TERMINAL FOR ENPLAINING. THERE IS NO METAL DETECTION EQUIPMENT IN USE AT THE AIRPORT.

2. ACCESS TO DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL TERMINALS (AS OPPOSED TO
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LOUNGES) IS NOT CONTROLLED AT ALL. AS IN MOST ARAB AIRPORTS,

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THRONGS OF PEOPLE ARE USUALLY CROWDED INTO THESE NON-RESTRICTED AREAS AWAITING ARRIVING PASSENGERS OR SEEING OFF THOSE DEPARTING. THUS, OPPORTUNITIES ARE AMPLE FOR DISRUPTIVE ACTIVITY OUTSIDE OF MAIN DEPARTURE/ARRIVAL CONTROL AREAS; IT WOULD REQUIRE MORE
CAREFUL PLANNING TO MOUNT A TERRORIST OPERATION WITHIN THE CONTROLLED AREAS OF THE AIRPORT, BUT IT COULD CERTAINLY BE DONE.

3. GOK WAS ALARMED OVER RASH OF BOMB THREAT SCARES AT AIRPORT LAST JUNE-JULY, AND OVER THE POROSITY OF AIRPORT SCREENING PROCEDURES WHICH THEY EVIDENTLY DISCOVERED DURING INVESTIGATIONS. INTERIOR MINISTRY UNDER SECRETARY HAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT GOK IS INTERESTED IN BUYING LATEST METAL DETECTION EQUIPMENT FOR AIRPORT USE, AND HAS ASKED FOR EMBASSY GUIDANCE AS TO METHODS AND EQUIPMENT RECOMMENDED TO UPGRADE AIRPORT SECURITY. EMBOFF DISCUSSED REQUEST WITH KUWAIT DESK OFFICER LYLE IN WASHINGTON LATE JULY. EMBASSY APPRECIATES INFORMATION ON FAA ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE AS NOTED REF B. EMBOFF CONVEYED THIS INFORMATION TO INTERIOR MINISTRY UNDERSECRETARY LATE AUGUST, AND WE NOW ARE AWAITING RESPONSE.

4. OUR BASIC INTERESTS WILL BE SERVED BY THE KIND OF TIGHTENING UP OF SECURITY AT AIRPORT WHICH KUWAITIS EVIDENTLY VISUALIZE (INSTALLATION OF METAL DETECTION EQUIPMENT, TRAINING OF KEY AIRPORT OFFICIALS). KUWAITIS WOULD HAVE POLITICAL PROBLEMS IN ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THEIR OBJECTIVES ARE TO COUNTER "TERRORISM", GIVEN THE SENSITIVITY OF THE TERM IN KUWAITI CONTEXT. THIS SENSITIVITY MAY UNDERLIE THE FAIRLY DISCREET KUWAITI APPROACH SOLICITING EMBASSY ASSISTANCE.

5. IN VIEW OF SIGNS THAT KUWAIT IS MOVING IN RIGHT DIRECTION, EMBASSY DOES NOT PLAN A SEPARATE APPROACH TO HOST GOVERMENT AT THIS TIME, BUT WILL FOLLOW UP IF INTMIN DOES NOT RESPOND.
MAESTRONE

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